

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West



Photo Credit: Winetta Owens

Though not large -- 31 feet high -- Derby Diversion Dam stands tall as the first project of the new U.S. Reclamation Service (now Bureau of Reclamation), organized under the Reclamation Act of 1902. The Act committed the federal government to construct permanent works--dams, reservoirs, and canals--to irrigate arid lands in the West. On March 14, 1903, Secretary of the Interior E. A. Hitchcock authorized five Reclamation projects. Among them was what became known as the Newlands Project, named after Nevada Congressman Francis Newlands, who sponsored the Act; Derby Dam is a feature of that project.

On the Truckee River about 20 miles east of Reno, Nev., the dam is a gated, concrete structure flanked on the left by an earthen embankment. With construction beginning on October 2, 1903, and completed in May 1905, Derby Diversion Dam diverts water from the Truckee River basin through a canal to a reservoir on the Carson River, 32 miles to the south. Overall, the Newlands Project provides irrigation water for about 73,000 acres of cropland in the Lahontan Valley near Fallon, Nev., and bench lands farther west, near Fernley.

For more information on Derby Diversion Dam:

http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/ReclamationDamsAndWaterProjects/Derby_Diversion_Dam.html